

To: Faulk, Libby[Faulk.Libby@epa.gov]; Peterson, Cynthia[Peterson.Cynthia@epa.gov]; Wall, Dan[wall.dan@epa.gov]; McKean, Deborah[mckean.deborah@epa.gov]
Cc: Card, Joan[Card.Joan@epa.gov]
From: Perrin, Rebecca
Sent: Tue 8/11/2015 10:40:15 PM
Subject: General Ag info for San Juan (NM and CO) and La Plata counties

Libby et. al,

The Region 6 Ag Advisor is out of the office through tomorrow, but I was able to work with Region 9 (Kerry Drake and Woody Loftis) Ag Advisor program to get the information about ag in the affected counties. Unfortunately, we were not able to pull specific ag statistics because those figures do not delineate where the irrigation water comes from in the county, so this information is based upon NRCS experience in the following counties along the affected rivers. I would not quote from it but it should help provide some additional background on what ag looks like in the affected area.

- CO – San Juan County: Per the NRCS District Conservationist, Sterling Moss, this county does not have a lot of ag which is supported by no ag stats from USDA Agricultural Statistics Service. This NRCS office has not received any question from farmers/ranchers in either San Juan or La Plata counties related to the spill.

- CO - La Plata County: Per Sterling Moss, this county has more agriculture. Most farmers in the county do not use Animas river water for irrigation, but the producers who do use the River, this is their only water source for livestock or irrigation. There are several incorporated ditch companies along the Animas River and these organizations will have lists of their shareholders (aka farmers) and will know how to reach them. Farmers have their own ditch or pipe system on their property. They get their water from an earthen ditch owned/maintained by the ditch companies who divert their water from the River. However, there is potentially one unincorporated ditch on the Animas River and there are some individual farmers who are able to pull their water directly from the river. The Colorado Division of Water Resources should have a list of all of the ditch companies and individuals who pull from the River. Most irrigation in this county is flood vs sprinkler. Crop mix off the river is mostly grass, hay, or alfalfa. There is corn (est. 100-200 acres), some oats, winter wheat and triticale (cross between wheat and rye). Winter wheat should already be harvested at this point. Oats are either coming out now or will be harvested by first week in Sept. The triticale and oats are more animal forage so it will either be cut for hay or grazed depending upon what the farmer needs. Everything but the corn which needs timed water application for maximum yield will probably be OK without irrigation water for another week, as long as there are additional rainstorms to get moisture in the soil. The more rain the less pressure for farmers to irrigate pasture. Of course, every farming system is different,

so the need to irrigate will depend more on the stage of crop growth and soil moisture levels. 90% of the livestock in this county is horses or cattle, with some sheep. Most livestock is not fenced off the river. However, some producers may have other pastures their livestock can graze in that is fenced off from this area depending upon their management system. Other producers may not have this option. Per the 2011 USDA County ag stats there was 20-23K head of cattle in this county. However, it is not possible to know how many of these cattle use pasture near, or water from, the Animas River.

-

- San Juan County, NM – Region 9 got the following info from Jose Pino, Soil conservationist with NRCS in Aztec, NM. Most fields are for pasture with flood irrigation from the Animas river. They do have some sprinkler irrigation. There is a diversity of crops, including vegetables, but predominantly alfalfa. Landowners with access to the river typically do use it for livestock water. The San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District has received press inquiry as a result of a lot of publicity they have had lately with microbial source tracking and water quality work they have been doing. There is small scale vegetable production which uses irrigation water from the River. ***On a side note, Vegetable production and irrigation water quality has additional rules to follow regarding water quality due to the Food Safety Management Act that the Food and Drug Administration administers. FDA is looking at e. coli levels because their concern is regarding pathogens. I suspect this may not be an issue for us but the rule has been confusing and I wanted you to be aware of it in case you get questions related to it from veggie farmers. If we do we can consult with FDA and I have a contact at HQ on this I can provide you if needed.*

Since yesterday I have received:

- 2 press inquiries (Channel 9 news in Denver and Produce News) which I have forwarded to OCPI. I may or may not get more.

- The Colorado Department of Agriculture called and let me know that they are willing to be a conduit of information from EPA to ag. They said they are not getting a lot of questions currently but they were in the beginning. They believe that most producers are getting their info directly from CSU and CDPHE.

- The Colorado Farm Bureau has reached out to me as their members are asking questions related to the spill. Specifically: What is in the water? Is it safe for plants? Is it safe for livestock? What is in the sediment? How will sediment impact irrigation in the future? How long will they need to worry about contamination in the water and sediment? A few weeks? Months? Longer? What happens if they did not get their irrigation intakes shut off in time and

some of the contaminated water got into their ditch system? Who do they call about getting alternative water for livestock? The State Chapter is going to reach out to their County Presidents in the area to see if they have any additional questions and will share those with us too. Who do you want me to have them communicate with directly at EPA?

- I also have heard from the Utah Dept. of Agriculture and there is not a lot of ag production from their perspective in this area due to the desert condition. Mostly livestock production (sheep and some cattle.) They shared with me the email about the metals and livestock production. Region 9 has not yet spoken to NRCS in UT about the ag mix on the Navajo Reservation. I can update on what we find out related to that too.

I hope this info is helpful. Let me know how if there is anything you need to help support your work. I will continue to refer press inquiries to Rich and Lisa.

Rebecca Perrin

Region 8 Agriculture Advisor | Office of the Regional Administrator | USEPA

1595 Wynkoop Street | Denver CO 80202 | DL: 303-312-6311 | FAX: 303-312-6882

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This e-mail message, including any attachments, is for the sole use of the intended recipient(s) and may contain confidential and privileged information. Any unauthorized review, use, disclosure, or distribution is prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender by reply e-mail and destroy all copies of the original message.